



Kiwanis
ACTION CLUB
Licking County

Single Service Project 2020-21 Contest

“Making a Difference – Providing Carts to Help People Collect Food at an Open Food Pantry”

1. Service Need

After five years of successful fundraisers and donations, our club had enough funds saved to start funding requests from the community. Club operations had to adapt starting in April 2020 due to the global Covid pandemic crisis. We could no longer meet in person. Soon we missed seeing everyone and doing our community service projects, so we figured out how to start meeting remotely online from homes or on our cell phones through Zoom. Not everyone had the skills or luxury of internet service, computers or smart phones, but many did and with the help of friends and aids. In the Fall of 2020 we started inviting speakers to our Zoom meetings, many were promoting their non-profits or service organizations to which we felt obligated to donate. We realized everyone could use some money but we couldn't give everyone funding. So we created an application for grant funding like our sponsoring Kiwanis club's used. The form helped us get more information about the organization, their funding situation, to better understand their needs and the specific purpose for our donation. Our first application was from the Last Call Outreach Ministries in Newark, Ohio. We learned that they provide emergency food and clothing to anyone in need (currently, approximately 100 families twice a week). They asked us to help buy better carts for their clients to use during the open food pantry to load with heavy boxes of food and take to their cars. They currently had none.

The service project was to provide better, safer carts or garden wagons to help serve over 100 clients (families) to move heavy boxes of food from the open food pantry to their cars. The clients could pull these carts faster and safer through the pantry to get the food they needed. The garden wagons and carts would also provide some stability and would be a safer solution since many of the clients are elderly, disabled and/or have small children. Furthermore, the pantry is located in an old school building, which has a parking lot that is not maintained and has gravel. The garden carts would be more useful and safe to use in snow and inclement weather.

2. Project Plan

A club member brought the grant request to the club's attention during a zoom meeting in December 2020. It was decided that more information was needed and questions were asked. Question 1. Would grocery carts work instead? Question 2. Could we get refurbished or donated grocery carts instead of spending our money? Question 3. How much does a cart cost? Question 4. How many carts do they really need? Question 5. Could we get a discount or donation if we talked to the store manager? So we invited the member and her mother who volunteered at the food pantry to a Zoom meeting to answer these questions and give us more background. She said they had grocery carts, but they were more useful storing loose food items and using them to quickly move and display food items in the hallway for clients to select. The grocery carts were not practical or safe to load or unload heavy boxes since they were narrow and deep. She said they needed desperately to find a safer, better solution. The pantry felt utility or garden carts would be ideal, but they had not tested one yet. We decided to buy two versions on sale from Harbor Freight to test at the pantry as a feasibility study. Both worked well and had different advantages and benefits. The garden cart proved to be more versatile and preferred. Clearly one was not enough. So we decided to pursue different options to buy them on discount or get more donated from businesses. A Committee was formed with the Chairperson who initiated the request and the President leading it. The Committee met for a few months online through Zoom. Kiwanis allies helped the committee form a plan and write it out. They helped with transport, writing letters, providing transportation, purchasing items, asking businesses for support and publicizing the project. The Committee report updates and final project completion at the monthly Aktion Club zoom meetings.

3. Project Implementation

The project idea was presented to the club during a Zoom meeting when the grant request was first presented to the club by a member. The member read the request to the club. The club voted to help the food pantry with carts, especially since we could not hold our annual food drive due to Covid. After a short discussion, we decided we wanted to do more than just give them money to buy a cart. We formed a committee to focus on the project and get more information. The President appointed a member to Chair the Committee. The Chair also had volunteered at the food pantry and knew more about it. The Committee met online through Zoom meetings and made a plan with help of Kiwanis volunteers, which they wrote down. They researched options for carts, best prices and visited the food pantry when it was open to talk to staff and see the actual need and carts available. The committee first purchased two types of carts (on sale) for the pantry to test:

a low platform cart and a utility, garden wagon with more sturdy wheels. The Committee decided with the help of the volunteer staff at the pantry that garden carts or wagons were the best solution. The Committee then drafted a letter to ask businesses for their support (donation or discount). The letter explained who the Aktion Club was, what the service project was and the need to the community and food pantry. Wearing an Aktion Club shirt and name badge, the Committee members and allies went to stores from a list of businesses who sold carts and presented the letter to the store manager. The members were very excited when Home Depot and Ace Hardware offered to help us by donating carts. Both stores donated two garden wagons at no charge. We wrote thank you letters to them and presented the wagons, along with the ones we purchased and had donated, to the Food Pantry as soon as we had them. The food pantry volunteers and clients were ecstatic to receive the carts. The number exceeded their expectations and all were used.

4. Final Results

We provided six carts and wagons to the open food pantry of the Last Call Outreach Ministries in Newark, Ohio. The carts now help to provide emergency food to anyone in need (currently, approximately 100 families twice a week). The pantry asked us to help them buy one cart for their clients to use during the open food pantry to load with heavy boxes of food and take to their cars. They had no utility carts or wagons. We ultimately provided them with six new carts and wagons with the help of local businesses. These carts or garden wagons now help the open food pantry better serve over 100 clients (families) to move heavy boxes of food from the open food pantry to their cars. The clients can pull these carts faster and safer through the pantry to get the food they needed. Clients and staff reported that the garden wagons and carts provide some stability when walking and are a safer solution since many of the clients are elderly, disabled and/or have small children. Also, since the pantry has a parking lot that is not maintained and has gravel, the garden carts have been more effective and safer to use in snow and inclement weather. The food pantry director sent us a letter signed by all the volunteers thanking the Aktion Club and allies who helped to make this project possible. The food pantry sent us pictures of the carts in use. The committee visited the pantry and took their own photos and publicized the project.

5. Public Awareness

The food pantry sent us a letter signed by all the volunteers thanking the Aktion Club and allies who helped make this project possible. The carts each had a sign "Donated from the Aktion Club of Licking County." The pantry also recognized the Aktion Club on their

permanent bulletin board in the pantry. The food pantry sent us pictures of the carts in use which we shared with the club. The committee visited the pantry and took their own photos to publish and share with the Aktion and Kiwanis clubs. The Chair, PR Committee and Kiwanis allies wrote an article about the club and project for the newspaper that was published. They submitted it to the Buckeye Bulletin Ohio Kiwanis District newsletter, Kiwanis website and Facebook where it was shared. They also shared it with the Kiwanis International magazine. The club President and Vice President were interviewed on two radio stations and talked about the project. The Committee invited the Aktion Club and Kiwanis Clubs to visit the food pantry to see the carts in action. The newspaper articles and other publicity also brought positive attention to the Aktion Club, Kiwanis, the businesses who contributed, the open food pantry and their service to the community.

6. Member Impact

Members learned more about planning and funding service projects. They enjoyed asking businesses for their support and talking to the managers. They enjoyed meeting separately as a committee online through Zoom. They felt isolated and inactive during the COVID stay-at-home period. The project and zoom meetings enabled them to stay active, be in social contact and make a huge impact to help feed those in need. The club decided every January to host a food drive dedicated to their Past President Kyle Gossett who died a few years ago. He inspired them to be creative, stay positive, have fun and made it a priority to help feed those in need. The club could not host a food drive during the pandemic. The food pantry cart request was a blessing from heaven during COVID. It gave the club a service purpose. It enabled members to learn new skills, stay active, work together and be social, and work with Kiwanians to make a huge, lasting impact by helping a local food pantry to better provide food to 100+ families in need each week. The club members enjoy knowing they made a difference and feel very proud. The Chairperson and Kiwanis allies felt the best when they delivered the carts to the pantry. The club members are proud of the newspaper articles and radio interview.

7. Additional Information

The Aktion Club is proud of their success completing this service project. We learned many new skills, including how to work as a Committee and how to communicate remotely through Zoom, how to do research and what questions to ask. We could not have done this without the help of our Kiwanis allies. With their help, our members learned how to plan a significant service project over the course of many committee meetings, how to set goals, how to complete the project and how to publicize it. These

are not easy skills to learn. We could not have completed this project without the help of our Kiwanis allies who are actively involved and willing to support our club. We really appreciated solving a serious problem and making a difference. We approached the project like a job. We enjoyed very much working with the businesses in the community. We were proud to be recognized for our efforts in the newspaper, the Kiwanis newsletter and on the radio. We truly enjoy helping others and we knew this project was important. We made a real impact in the World.

Below are photographs of materials and publications related to this project.



